

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4030

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 2341

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, PK

SUBJECT: INDO-PAK RELATIONS

REF: NEW DELHI 0570

1. POLCOUNSELOR REVIEWED INDO-PAK RELATIONS WITH MEA JOINT SECRETARY (PAK/AFGHAN) CHIB FEB. 13 AND FOUND CHIB SOMEWHAT MORE UPBEAT THAN ON LAST OCCASION (REFTEL). CHIB SAID HE THOUGHT RELATIONS HAD BEGUN TO TURN UPWARD SLOWLY AND THAT THERE MIGHT BE FURTHER IMPROVEMENT OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS.

2. THE LARGE OUTSTANDING ISSUES STILL REMAIN STALEMATED, HOWEVER. DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ARE ON THE SHELF. THE GOI CONTINUES TO OPPOSE ARBITRATION OF THE SALAL DAM DISPUTE (WHICH IS PERMITTED UNDER INDUS WATER AGREEMENT) BUT HAS AGREED THAT IF THE GOP WISHES TO GO THIS ROUTE IT IS ENTITLED TO DO SO. CHIB SAID HE SAW NO SIGN THAT THE GOP WOULD SHIFT ITS POSITION ON THIS QUESTION AND THE GOI WAS THEREFORE EXPLORING THE QUESTION OF AN ACCEPTABLE ARBITRATOR. THE GOI IS ALSO STILL UNWILLING TO ACCEPT THE GOP PROPOSAL ON CIVIL AVIATION TALKS, CHIB CHARACTERIZING THE GOP POSITION AS STILL ESSENTIALLY ONE OF MERELY POST-
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PONING FURTHER ACTION IN ICAO RATHER THAN ABJURING IT.

HE SAW LITTLE PROSPECT OF PROGRESS IN THE SHORT RUN ON THIS ISSUE EITHER.

3. MORE ENCOURAGING HAD BEEN THE GOP REACTION TO GOI LETTERS ON PROPAGANDA AND CHIB THOUGHT THIS A GOOD SING FOR THE COMING MONTHS. SIMILARLY, HE SAID, THE GOI HAD JUST RECEIVED A FEW DAYS AGO THE GOP'S AGREEMENT TO AN INDIAN PROPOSAL MADE LAST MAY THAT BOTH SIDES DISCUSS THEIR MARITIME BOUNDARY IN THE ARABIAN SEA. CHIB SAID THE INDIANS HOPED THAT FAIRLY PROMPT DISCUSSIONS COULD BE HELD ON THIS SUBJECT TO DEFINE THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH BOUNDARY DEMARCACTION WOULD BE MADE. THERE HAD ALSO BEEN SOME IMPROVEMENT IN PAKISTANI POLICY ON ISSUING VISAS TO SOME CATEGORIES OF INDIANS WISHING TO VISIT PAKISTAN, AND HE HOPED THAT THIS WOULD SOON EXTEND TO NEWSMEN AS WELL.

4. IN RESPONSE TO A QUERY ON PRESS REPORTS OF RAIL CONSTRUCTION ON THE PAKISTANI SIDE TO ENABLE RAIL LINKS TO BE RESTORED BETWEEN INDIAN AND PAKISTAN, CHIB SAID THE INDIAN RAILWAY MINISTRY HAD INFORMED MEA THAT THEY WERE UNAWARE OF ANY PAKISTANI PLAN OR ACTIVITY DIRECTED TOWARD THIS OBJECTIVE AT THE PRESENT TIME. CHIB SAID THE MEA HAD ALSO RECEIVED NO INFORMATION FROM THE GOP, ALTHOUGH THE SUGGESTION THAT RESUMPTION OF RAIL LINKS WOULD BE USEFUL, HAD AGAIN BEEN MADE BY THE INDIAN STATE TRADING CORPORATION TO THE GOP LAST MONTH.

5. CHIB SAID THAT HIS IMPRESSION OF RECENT GOP CABINET AND PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR SHIFTS WAS THAT IT DID NOT CHANGE MUCH (ISLAMABAD 1348). HE THOUGHT BHUTTO'S OBJECTIVE IN MOVING TIKKA KHAN UP AS PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR HAD BEEN TO OPEN UP ROOM FOR YOUNGER ARMY OFFICERS WITHIN THE ACTUAL ARMY STRUCTURE (HE WAS STRUCK BY FACT THAT NEW ARMY CHAIRMAN HAD BEEN ONLY BRIGADIER IN 1971 AND HAD BEEN LEAP-FROGGED TO PROMOTION OVER NUMEROUS SENIOR OFFIERS). HE SAW THIS AS MEANS OF BROADENING SUPPORT FOR HIMSELF WITHIN ARMY WHILE KEEPING CLOSE TOUCH WITH TIKKA KHAN HIMSELF. HE DID NOT SEE MUCH SIGNIFICANCE IF ANY FOR INDO-PAK RELATIONS IN THE CHANGES, HOWEVER.

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6. COMMENT: PROMOTION OF JAGAT MEHTA TO BE FOREIGN SECRETARY IN MARCH (NEW DELHI 2340) MAY ALSO BE SALUTARY FOR INDO-PAK RELATIONS. MEHTA IS NOT A PUNJABI, HAS NEVER SERVED IN PAKISTAN, HAS A GENERALLY NON-ACERBIC VIEW OF INDO-PAKISTANI RELATIONS, AND MAY PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY WITHIN THE BUREAU-CRACY TO TAKE A FRESH LOOK AT SOME OF THE ISSUES WHICH INDIAN PUNJABI AND KASHMIRI FOREIGN SECRETARIES HAVE CHEWED OVER FOR THE LAST HALF-DOZEN YEARS.

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